

# Djiboutians receive medical treatment at newly renovated Tadjoura hospital

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Adam C. Schnell

**TADJOURA, Djibouti** - Less than two weeks ago, people from the small village of Tadjoura put the finishing touches on their newly renovated hospital with the help of the Americans.

On Jan. 18, the same village was the site where not only one, but two, civil affairs detachments provided health care to nearly 1,200 people at the first Medical Civic Action Program of the new year.

More than 50 personnel participated in the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa funded project. Local military and civilian physicians, along with German and CJTF-HOA medics were on hand to support the needs of the almost 600 villagers seen per day.

"The MEDCAP went smoother than expected," said Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Adour, director of the Tadjoura Medical Hospital.

The resident director said it is great that the people of Tadjoura can get American medicine and spread the word about the newly renovated hospital. Now, the people can come here to get treated by the staff.

"I would like it a lot if the American military would come back maybe every three or four months to treat people," said Oumata Hassan, a member of the Tadjoura community.

The MEDCAP is one of many others performed in the Horn of Africa in the past few years. Although each is different, the process of nominating and running a MEDCAP is much the same.

First a way to organize the numerous villagers seeking medical attention must be established. For the recent MEDCAP, color-coded tickets were given out to the local physicians to give to the people in the community who they choose.

The ticket shows which day and what time the individual holding it will be seen by a medic, said Army Col. John S. Allerding, preventive medicine officer for the 412th Civil Affairs Battalion, the 478th Civil Affairs Battalion's newly-arrived replacements.

"I came here and received a ticket after I heard my neighbors talking about the medicine they received and how well everyone was being treated," said one local man.

Once their time to be seen comes, the ticket holders are taken to a preventive medicine class where basic health care and dental hygiene is taught. Toothbrushes and toothpaste are also handed out to each person.



(Above) Army Col. John S. Allerding, preventive medicine officer for the D Company, 412th Civil Affairs Battalion, inspects the ear of a woman during a Medical Civic Action Program here Jan. 18. The civil affairs detachments provided health care to nearly 1,200 people at the first Medical Civic Action Program of the new year. (Below) Djiboutians from around Tadjoura Medical Hospital for the recent MEDCAP.

"Before this, I knew a few things to keep healthy," said Saada Jbrahim Mohamade, a local Tadjourian woman. "Here I've gained a lot of knowledge that I will practice and teach to my neighbors."

From preventive medicine each person goes through a process that determines where the person will go next. The main cases seen at the MEDCAP are those chronic illnesses a person would see in any developing country, said Allerding.

This is not the first time people here were given the opportunity to seek medical attention for free. The previous project saw 500 people in the 55,000-person village.

"The second day there is always more people," said Army Sgt. Boris J. Boisson, a member of the 478th Civil Affairs Battalion. "Word of the projects spreads through the neighborhoods and people come from all over."

Besides the MEDCAP showing off the newly renovated hospital to the community, it also marks a transition between the outgoing civil affairs battalion and the incoming.

"We have an opportunity here to build upon the

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The Horn Courier



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Cover photo by LCpl. Adam C. Schnell  
A young Djiboutian girl looks on shyly at the Medical Civic Action Program in Tadjoura at a hospital recently renovated by a cooperative effort with the local towns people and contractors and CJTF-HOA.

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